1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

people could be obtained there as well as anywhere, and on my second expedition I could to some extent correct the mistakes of the first. On the other hand, I was unable to study one or two villages (e.g. Yeti, in the oil-palm area, and Kutiwengi, where an interesting variety of a certain religious cult is reported to exist), partly because I had discovered their significance too late, and partly because my time did not allow the inclusion of further centres and communities.

The main centres on which I based my investigation were: Bida town, with its surrounding belt of hamlets and small villages; the large villages of Kutigi, in the centre of Nupe country, and Mokwa, in the west; and finally Jebba Island on the Niger, which commands an important stretch of the river area. Each of these centres I visited several times. The repeated periods of study enabled me to check my material and to remedy oversights; often they led to the discovery of new points of view which only emerged from the comparison of the cultural variations typical of different areas and local communities. In addition I stayed for shorter periods in certain other communities in order to study a specific question or to collect certain comparative evidence. Thus, for example, I paid several short visits to the village Lemu, twenty miles north of Bida, because a new commercial crop had been adopted that year by the people of Lemu; and once I spent two weeks in Patigi (a quite uninteresting visit, by the way), because there the last descendants of the old dynasty of Nupe kings hold court.

Bida, the large capital of the country, required the longest time. Here also I began my studies of the Nupe language with the help of the English- and Hausa-speaking teachers of Bida Middle School. During these first months I carried out my anthropological work through the medium of Hausa, which I had studied before going to the field, and which is widely understood among the people of Bida, but from the fifth or sixth month of my stay I used Nupe exclusively. During the first expedition I spent altogether six months in Bida and the Bida area, in the course of three visits; three months in Kutigi, in the course of two visits; and one month each in Mokwa, Agaie, and Jebba Island. During the second expedition I spent five months in Bida, in the course of two visits, two months in Kutigi, in the course of two visits, three months, in one visit, in Jebba and on the river, and two months on travels to the neighbouring area of Gbari country and to Ilorin, Ibadan, and Lokoja, where I made a special study of the large Nupe colonies in these towns.

The difficulty of discovering in this large and complex culture representative areas and group sections, and of distinguishing them from others whose cultural life must be regarded as a variation of the main pattern, arises in a different form with regard to documentation. The problem here is how to prove with scientific exactitude the typical or non-typical nature of cultural facts and events, and how to present them convincingly as representative or as in some degree deviating from the norm. The distinction between typical and non-typical facts is primarily a question of frequency, and the ideal method of documentation would be one in which all descriptions and analyses were backed by statistical evidence. For obvious reasons such a method of documentation is rarely

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

128 applicable. So far as it was possible I have made efforts to supplement all descriptions with quantitative evidence to show the frequency and regularity of social facts and events. It must be understood that where I limited myself to a few descriptions or single instances these are presented (unless stated otherwise) as typical instances, and that there exists sufficient evidence of their representative nature. But I must admit that in certain cases no such evidence could be adduced: if I record the absence of a certain cultural fact or its occurrence in a certain degree of frequency, this may only mean that the fact did not occur at all, or did not occur in any higher degree of frequency, in the areas and groups with which I was mainly dealing, and during the time of my investigation. Unhappily, the orbit of the anthropologist is limited by time and space. The larger and more complex the group which he studies, the more strongly he feels his dependence upon that treacherous purveyor of facts, chance. It was chance that brought to my knowledge the fact that in one small and unimportant Nupe village succession to chieftainship is matrilineal—an isolated occurrence in that otherwise conspicuously patrilineal society. And it was chance that led me to the discovery, in a small riverain village, of a certain ritual which amounted to a symbolic 'king-killing'—again a usage for which there seems to be no parallel in other parts of Nupe. I could discover no evidence that would allow me to explain these anomalies, and I have put them down as such, well aware of the possibility (slight though it may be) of such evidence existing, undiscovered, in the villages and group sections of Nupe to which my studies did not extend. The general knowledge of the cultural constellation gained from the available material allows us to a certain extent to formulate theories, to predict, as it were, whether or not a certain cultural fact is likely to occur, or to occur in this or that frequency. But we can predict only a likelihood; we can delimit the possible sources of error: we can eliminate them as little as we can eliminate chance itself.

The presentation of the material involves also difficulties of a more technical nature. Its very quantity forbade treatment in the form of a comprehensive monograph. Nor did the material lend itself to a neat division into a number of separate treatises each dealing with a different aspect of the anthropological quadrivium—kinship, political organization, economics, religion. The solution could only be found in a compromise. My original intention was to build the book round the relation between the two paramount group configurations, political association and family—'Kingdom and Kinship'. But this would still have meant a very unwieldy book. The final result, then, is a 'rump' monograph, dealing with the culture of Nupe viewed from the two angles of political and economic organization—two aspects of culture which must be regarded as inseparable. Even so, I had to leave out, or to reduce to a short quasi-preliminary outline, the description of two domains of culture the bearing of which upon the problems of the book I will not minimize: religion and law.

I must anticipate two further criticisms. One may be provoked by the

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

rather unusual dichotomous arrangement of certain chapters. It was necessitated by the nature of the material, by the contrasting configurations which dominate the cultural life of Nupe—urban and rural culture, Mohammedanism and paganism, the organization of the state and the organization of the village community. One dichotomous formulation I have made almost the *leitmotif* of this analysis, namely, the twofold classification of social systems, formulated most clearly by MacIver, into *Communities* and *Associations*. Let me quote his definition: Community is a 'circle of people who live together, who belong together, so that they share, not this or that particular interest, but a whole set of interests wide enough and comprehensive enough to include their lives'. And Association: 'a group specifically organized for the purpose of an interest or group of interests which its members have in common.'[1] These two categories are used in this book consistently in MacIver's sense, that is, as descriptive categories defining, not rigidly separated social entities, but rather two poles of a more fluid social reality of many shades and grades.

Again, it might be objected that the descriptive accounts in this book are frequently interspersed with theoretical discussions. I shall offer no apology. Description is meaningless and misleading unless supplemented by a clarification of the concepts and categories with which it operates, and by an assessment in terms of theoretical generalizations of the concrete data which it produces. This is doubly true of the complex and, from the viewpoint of traditional anthropology, unusual culture described in this book. Thus I was forced to devote comparatively long theoretical discussions to the examination of such concepts as 'tribe' (in Chapter II) and 'state' (in Chapter VI), to the analysis of social class in Nupe (Chapter VIII), and to an inquiry into the relation between economics and sociology (Chapter XX).

In the research programme of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, under whose auspices the present investigation was carried out, the study of culture change under the impact of modern Western civilization is assigned a prominent place. Culture contact in Nupe is not restricted to this most recent historical phase; nor does it affect only certain well-defined domains of social life—it pervades the whole history and the whole living culture of the people. Nor can it be said (with some anthropologists) that the study of modern culture contact entails specific methods of approach, applicable only to this one aspect of social development. It did not therefore seem feasible to concentrate its examination in special chapters. Every description and analysis contained in this book bears to lesser or greater extent also on the problems of culture contact and culture change, ancient or modern. Only in a few instances did the material lend itself to a separate treatment of modern culture contact. They will be found in Chapter X, under the heading 'Problems of Adaptation', in Chapter XVII, which is entitled 'Industrial Labour', and in Chapter XIX, in the section on 'Modern Business Methods'.

[1] R. M. MacIver, *Society, Its Structure and Changes*, 1931, pp. 9, 12, 13.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

PREFACE

THIS book is intended as a sequel to my first monograph on the Nupe people, *A Black Byzantium*, the material presented there—on economic and political organization, and on kinship and the regulations of adolescence—being largely presupposed in the present volume. Here and there, however, the run of the argument necessitated a somewhat fuller reference to the data contained in the earlier book, so that repetitions and some overlapping could not altogether be avoided. Much the same applies to various papers which I previously published on particular aspects of Nupe culture.

In one respect the present account might seem incomplete; for it omits the full discussion of a topic not previously treated and one well suited to the context of a book on religion, namely, myths and legends. The reason for this omission is partly a practical one, since an exhaustive treatment of Nupe legends, which would inevitably lead on to ordinary tales and folklore, would have overburdened the present volume. But partly, the omission can be justified on the grounds that these tales and legends are of relatively little relevance for the understanding of Nupe religion, which point will be dealt with in due course.

As readers of *A Black Byzantium* will know, the Nupe people are today in great measure Mohammedanized, the influence of Islam steadily encroaching upon the indigenous form of worship. If, therefore, in this description of Nupe religion I were to take my lead from the actually obtaining state of affairs, I should have to assign equal weight to Nupe–Islam and to the traditional creed, if not indeed to give prominence to the former. In fact, I have done the reverse; more precisely, I have treated Islam in Nupe as an intrusion, as an instance (to use the familiar phrase) of 'culture contact', and the indigenous religion as my true or main subject-matter. I do not think that this viewpoint needs to be specially defended. The fact that the traditional observances had already disappeared from many parts of the country during my stay in 1934–6 and have probably receded even further since, far from detracting from our interest in the indigenous creed, only renders

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

128
[71]

the task of recording and analysing it more important as well as pressing.

A purely technical point in conclusion. It is always difficult to decide, in books of this kind, just how much scope should be given to vernacular words and quotations. Clearly, in a topic like religion certain crucial terms must be given, or must at least be introduced, in the vernacular. But too generous a use of the indigenous language is both clumsy and confusing to the reader. I have therefore tried to reduce it to a minimum. Nor do I think that this entails a serious loss of accuracy; for even the most intricate vernacular terms are translatable, even though the translation itself might have to be specially explained and perhaps justified: which is precisely the procedure I propose to adopt.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

I

THE NUPE CREED

I. PROLEGOMENA

THE title of this book, *Nupe Religion*, suggests a logical unity in our subject-matter which, at the very outset, might appear problematical. Two questions, in particular, might be raised. First, are we in fact dealing with *one* religion of *one* people, that is, with beliefs and practices which both form a coherent system and occur uniformly throughout the society? And second, how far are we dealing with 'religion' in the strict sense of the word, and with it alone, to the exclusion of 'magic', mere 'superstitions', and other, cruder forms of belief?

The answer to the first question cannot be given in the form of a simple 'yes' or 'no'; nor can all the issues involved properly be judged so early in the discussion. Let me, however, anticipate the relevant points. The religious beliefs and practices of the Nupe differ considerably in different parts of the country; we shall frequently meet with local cults and with forms of worship varying from region to region, even from village to village. Furthermore, the main acts of worship, their execution and promises, concern the single village community, and not that widest group, the Nupe people or tribe. Nor indeed is that widest group an unequivocal unit. The people who call themselves Nupe are internally divided in various ways—by ethnic descent, by tribal segmentation and, partly, political allegiance, by the cleavage between urban and peasant population, and by the barriers of social class. The bulk of the Nupe people is held together in the kingdom of that name, and in the following description we shall mainly be concerned with the politically united tribe or nation. Even so, certain of the internal divisions remain, and these, too, entail corresponding divergences in religious belief and practice.

It might seem, therefore, that in speaking of 'Nupe religion' we are merely employing a convenient descriptive phrase, a summary reference of the kind ethnographers find useful when they wish to state that such-and-such observances are found in a particular group or area. But the phrase is intended to mean more than this.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

771
128

The varieties of belief and practice found in Nupe are at least roughly akin, both in their content and in what might be called their style; though they exhibit no conspicuous uniformity or even consistency, they yet hang together in relevant respects and also reflect an identical psychological tenor. Most important of all, the people themselves think of their religion in terms of such an underlying unity; indeed, as we shall see, they tend to exaggerate it. Thus, though the local observances may differ and the congregations in acts of worship be no larger than single village communities, there is a clear understanding that the diverse and separate practices are instances of a common creed. When the people performing one kind of ceremonial comment on the different usage in another part of the country, they yet imply that the two belong together or, more precisely, belong to something wider than both. So that, over and above internal divisions, the people draw the (to them) much more important distinction between the sum total of beliefs and practices in their tribe, and the different totals of this kind in others.

It must be emphasized, however, that for the people this over-all unity is not constituted by the intrinsic coherence of the religious usages that happen to occur in their tribe; it is constituted, rather, by the fact that these usages do occur in their tribe and hence are typical of and valid for a given people or society. That collective entity—the people called Nupe—is the basic premiss; the diverse beliefs and practices are construed into a common creed on that basis.

The precise relationship between the total society and the 'total creed' will occupy us at a later stage. Here we might note that the Nupe have no special, collective name for their religion. They have names only for particular conceptions, single practices, local ceremonials. As for the total creed, the Nupe can describe it only circuitously and enumeratively, as being concerned with the God *Soko*, and not with deities named differently; with such-and-such rituals or 'medicines', and not with others; with spirits, but not anthropomorphous ones, and so forth. Yet it is for them a 'total creed' none the less. If it be argued that this cannot be so, since in this case the people would have found a way of summarizing all these aspects in a name indicative of their over-all unity (as we do when we speak of Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism), the answer is that they do not think of their creed in that way. As they think of it, it has no identity apart from its validity-for-a-society; so that it would be meaningless to define it by a separate concept. Differently expressed, Nupe religion is a tribal or national religion, and *one* inasmuch as a tribe or nation claims it as its own.

To turn to our second question, which, let this be stressed, is of a purely preliminary order. It is here raised, not for the sake of

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

discussing the meaning or essence of religious belief or of separating its relevant varieties, but merely in order to outline the kind of data that have been included in this book and to justify their inclusion. The word 'religion' will here be understood in the widest and loosest sense. I have not, for example, made the familiar distinction between religion and magic a criterion for the selection or arrangement of the material. Not that the Nupe are without observances and concepts which merit the name 'religious', however narrowly understood. But other beliefs and practices, though they might not satisfy the criteria of 'religion proper', will not for that reason be excluded or kept on one side.

It does not seem very difficult to define our position in general terms. Convenient phrases are at hand, such as: By 'religion' shall here be meant all beliefs and practices implying communication with and control of the supernatural, whether this is attempted through appeals and prayers to some transcendental intelligence (in the manner of religion) or quasi-mechanically, by the manipulation of 'magic' agencies. But this equation of religion with 'supernaturalism' (as Lowie would say), convenient though it may be, only poses further problems of definition; and the familiar category of the 'supernatural' proves on closer inspection to be itself ambiguous.

When speaking of attempts at communicating with or controlling the supernatural we are clearly viewing the situation through the eyes of the people we are studying, imputing to *them* the thought of transcending the given reality; we should probably impute to them also definite attitudes and feelings relating to the things transcendental, such as awe or fear, humility or ecstasy, or the emotional concentration we call worship. Yet when we try to define the supernatural itself we are driven to assume the opposite viewpoint and to judge the transcendentality of things by our own way of thinking. Nor, indeed, can we avoid veering round from one viewpoint to the other, since neither is by itself fully satisfactory.

Consider that any definition of the supernatural must introduce the contrast with the domain of empirical and scientific knowledge; more precisely, when judging any action or notion to be concerned with the supernatural we assert by implication that it is concerned with existences or influences (beings, 'powers', 'forces') the assumption of which conflicts with the principles of empirical enquiry and verification.[1] And since these principles and

[1] It must be emphasized that the relevant conflict is with the *principles* of empirical knowledge and with the *methods* of scientific enquiry, not merely with the body of information extant at any given moment. For in the latter case any scientific theory in advance of existing ideas or techniques of verification would be 'supernatural'.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

INTRODUCTION

The confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers has for long been a focal area of migrations, commerce, and conquest, which have set up cultural cross currents of many kinds. The Igala, the Jukun, and the Fulani have at various times conquered large parts of the region and these wars have left deep impressions on the institutions of the peoples.

The area as a whole is fairly open savannah or " orchard bush," but it is fly-infested and cattle cannot be reared successfully. The agriculture, which dominates the economy, includes the cultivation of crops, such as guinea-corn and yams, characteristic of Northern and Southern Nigeria respectively, hence the term " Middle Belt " which is frequently applied to the Niger-Benue region. The Nupe country is one of the northernmost areas in which the oil-palm and kola nut are found; the Niger watershed in Igala and the southern fringe of districts in Idoma also lie within the " palm belt." Settlement is fairly continuous over the area as a whole and there is considerable intermixture of ethnic groups. Population is moderately dense—between 30 and 60 persons per square mile over wide areas—though it is considerably sparser north of the Benue and in some Nupe districts west of the Kaduna River.

Continuous European contact with the Niger-Benue region began with Lander's descent of the Niger in 1830. In 1832–33 the Laird and Oldfield expedition succeeded in getting some distance up the Benue and visited the whole river front of the Igbira and Igala countries. They found the country north of the Benue much disturbed by Fulani raids. The markets around the confluence were major centres of the slave trade[1] and in 1855 Crowther heard Igala, Igbira, Nupe, Kakanda, Hausa, Yoruba, Idoma, Jukun, and Ibo being spoken at the Igbede market at the confluence.[2]

The tribes of the Niger-Benue confluence speak Kwa languages, while to the east the region borders directly on a solid block of tribes speaking so-called " Semi-Bantu " languages.[3] But there has been great terminological confusion, with reference to both languages and ethnic groups, especially concerning the large body of Idoma-speaking peoples lying between Igala and Tiv country, where the name Akpoto or Okpoto was used in various 19th-century accounts to include all the region from the confluence to the Tiv border. Whatever the original situation may have been, however, the only group in the area which today calls itself and its language Akpoto is the peoples of the central and western Idoma-speaking districts. The situation is further confused by the fact that there is a district of Igala called Akpoto, south of Ankpa. This district borders on Idoma, and the people on both sides of the border are largely bilingual. As will be seen from the section on the Idoma, many of the " languages " of this region which have hitherto received separate treatment in the literature can now be shown to be closely related dialects of Idoma. Although north of the Benue the situation appears simpler, this may well be due to continuing ignorance of the ethnography and linguistics of the area.

Politically the peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence exhibit widely differing systems, ranging from the highly organized state of the Nupe with a ruling dynasty of Fulani descent, and the Igbira and Igala chiefdoms with their " divine kings," to the fragmentary statelets of the Idoma-speaking peoples and the small autonomous " clans " of the Egede. The Nupe are the only people to have been Islamized to any considerable extent.

In describing these very diverse peoples, who have nevertheless been in contact over long periods, it has been found most convenient to deal first with the Nupe

[1] Clapperton and Lander, 1829, p. 297.
[2] Crowther, 1855, p. 167.
[3] See Crowther, 1855, p. 65, and below, pp. 78–9, 90–2.

of Niger and Ilorin Provinces, on whom there is a considerable literature. An account is next given of the Igbira and the Igala of Kabba Province; this is necessarily uneven and provisional in view of the very limited sources. The account of the Idoma-speaking peoples of Benue Province is based mainly on Dr. Armstrong's field investigations and his study of unpublished local records. The peoples have been grouped by him as follows: first the Idoma " Proper " of Idoma Division, with their outliers the Iyala and Nkum and the so-called Arago of Doma and Keana, and secondly other groups speaking languages closely related to Idoma, namely, the Afu of Nassarawa, and the Egede, Akweya-Yachi and Utonkon-Effium of Idoma and Ogoja Divisions.

41:Nadel P,E-5 (1934-1936) 1937
FF62 Yoruba FF62
Nupe FF52

The present study can only claim to be a first attempt in field experiments of this kind, carried out under conditions which did not allow a more extensive investigation. Yet the question could be raised how far the evidence obtained in experiments which were carried out on so small a scale and in so special a setting can be considered significant and representative of the culture at large. In order to secure a representative group I selected for my experimental subjects students who came from a great many different places in Nupe and Yoruba respectively. The two experimental groups were matched as closely as possible with regard to age, school standard and the surroundings from which they came. In Nupe I was able to work with larger groups: with 60 boys of the age of 12–18 who were taken from every school form, i.e. who had been students of the Middle School for periods varying from 1 to 5 years. Now, as I shall show later, the experiments admit to a certain extent of statistical interpretation, i.e. the responses to certain essential features in the story or the pictures can be classified and treated quantitatively. This statistical evidence allows us to gauge the extent to which the 20 Yoruba subjects can be considered a significant and representative sample. I found that the means for the various responses calculated for the small group correspond very closely to the means arrived at for the large group; in other words, there exist no unequally distributed marked individual differences which would invalidate the results obtained among the small group. Since school standard and age do not correspond very closely in Nigerian schools, the statistical evidence can moreover be used to check independently the influence of age and educational standard. As regards the age factor, we find a slight rise in the appreciation of factors of reasoning and emotional facts corresponding to age; a fairly unchanged appreciation of situational facts; and a fall in the appreciation of moral ideas from the age of 13–15. More important for this investigation is the educational factor; here the statistical evidence proves conclusively that the difference in educational standard has no influence on the psychological responses and attitudes examined in these experiments.

III. THE CULTURE DIFFERENCES

Before going into details I must say a few words about the two cultures and the nature of their diversity. The two groups speak different languages which, however, belong to the same linguistic group (of so-called *Sudanic* languages). Their economic system and their general social organization are similar. Yet other aspects of their culture, aspects which may be held to express more specifically psychological trends or tendencies,[1] reveal a fundamental difference. The religion of the Yoruba is characterized by an elaborate and rationalized hierarchical system of deities, each of which has its specific, specialized duty and function. The Nupe have no such system; their religious beliefs centre round a concept of magic of the 'mana' type, i.e. vague, abstract, impersonal power. In the rich, highly developed realistic art of the Yoruba the main *motif* of pictures, plastics and wooden images is the human figure; religious and mythical emblems of this kind play an important part in their life. Again,

[1] See my article on "The Typological Approach to Culture" (a).